

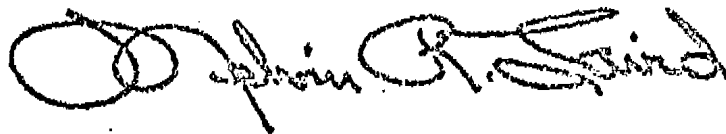
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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

13 OCT 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
SUBJECT: Special Assessment of Situation in MR III

Yesterday I asked Fred Woyand to come in with a special assessment of the situation around Saigon. I am forwarding his response for your information.



OSD REVIEWED 08-Mar-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION.

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1. PER OUR TELCON THE FOLLOWING IS MY ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN MR III.
2. ENEMY INTENTIONS: ALTHOUGH ENEMY FAILURES AND RVN MILITARY STRENGTH HAVE FORCED ALTERATION OF ENEMY STRATEGY, ENEMY PLANS TO ATTEMPT INCREASED PRESSURE IN MR 3 AND SAIGON HAVE NOT CHANGED. THE ENEMY HAS SHOWN EVERY INTENTION TO MAINTAIN A WIDESPREAD PRESENCE BY CONTINUING TO OCCUPY GVN LAND. HE INTENDS TO CONDUCT SCREENING AND ECONOMY-OF-FORCE OPERATIONS WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF TYING DOWN MAJOR ARVN UNITS AND HAMPERING GVN EFFORTS TO REGAIN ENEMY-CONTROLLED TERRITORY. OVERALL, HANOI DESIRES TO REGAIN THE INITIATIVE IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD, AND BELIEVES THAT ANY SUCCESS IN CREATING INCIDENTS WITHIN THE CAPITAL AREA WOULD APPLY PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE UPON THE U.S. ONE OBVIOUS OBJECTIVE IS TO CONSTRUCT A THREAT FACADE THAT WILL PUSH ARVN INTO A DEFENSIVE POSTURE, DEMANDING THE COUNTRYSIDE OF GVN SECURITY. PRIMARY GOALS REMAIN THE DEFEAT OF PACIFICATION, DOWNFALL OF THE GVN, AND ULTIMATELY, SOME FORM OF ALLIED POLITICAL CAPITULATION.
3. ENEMY CAPABILITIES: THROUGHOUT THE MILITARY REGION, THE ENEMY'S DEPLETED MAIN FORCE STRENGTH PROHIBITS A RESUMPTION OF MAJOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS ON THE SAME SCALE AS SEEN EARLY IN THE CAMPAIGN. THE ENEMY CAN TEMPORARILY INTERDICT MAJOR LOC, AND CONDUCT LIMITED GROUND ATTACKS AGAINST OUTLYING INSTALLATIONS. ENEMY FORCES CAN INITIATE ATTACKS BY FIRE AND SAPPER ACTIVITIES AGAINST ALLIED POSITIONS, THEREBY TYING DOWN ARVN UNITS TO A DEFENSIVE ROLE. MAIN FORCES IN SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHS ARE NOT CAPABLE OF STRIKING DIRECTLY AT SAIGON, EXCEPTING ABF AND POSSIBLY

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PAGE 1

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LIMITED SAPPER ACTIVITY, INEFFECTIVE COMMAND AND CONTROL CAPABILITY CONTINUES TO SERIOUSLY RESTRICT ENEMY SUCCESS, AND HE IS NOT EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO EFFECT TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OR COORDINATION OF ATTACK PLANS.

4. RVNAF CAPABILITIES AND ACTIONS TAKEN TO COPE WITH THE ENEMY EFFORT: AT THE FIRST INDICATIONS OF ENEMY MOVEMENT TOWARDS SAIGON, GEN MINH BEGAN TO SHIFT HIS FORCES SOUTH ASTRIDE THE AVENUES OF APPROACH INTO THE CAPITAL. IN SO DOING, HE HAS WITHDRAWN ARVN REGULAR FORCES FROM LARGE PORTIONS OF THE MR, ALTHOUGH HIS TACTICAL DISPOSITIONS AROUND SAIGON ARE SOUND, THEY ARE DEFENSIVE IN NATURE, AND THERE IS LITTLE OFFENSIVE ACTIVITY APPARENT. IN SOUTHERN BINH DUONG PROV, 20 KM NORTH OF SAIGON, TWO REGIMENTS OF THE 25TH ARVN DIV ARE DEPLOYED FROM THE SAIGON RIVER ON THE WEST TO PHU LOI ON THE EAST, ONE REGT IS BLOCKING THE MAIN ROUTES SOUTH AND THE OTHER REGT IS SWEEPING THE AREA NORTH OF THE BLOCKING POSITIONS. TO THE NW OF SAIGON THE III CORPS STRIKE FORCE IS OPERATING IN THE VICINITY OF CU CHI WITH FIVE BATTALIONS CONDUCTING SEARCH OPERATIONS AND COVERING APPROACHES FROM THE NW. TO THE WEST AND SW OF SAIGON TERRITORIAL FORCES ARE DEPLOYED THROUGHOUT HAU NGHIA AND LONG AN PROVS, NE OF SAIGON A RANGER GROUP AND TERRITORIAL FORCES ARE DEPLOYED ON THE APPROACHES TO BIEN HOA, WITHIN THE CAPITAL MILITARY DISTRICT BOTH REGULAR AND TERRITORIAL FORCES ARE DEPLOYED FOR CLOSE IN DEFENSE OF THE CITY, PRESENTLY A RANGER TASK FORCE IS DEPLOYED IN THE NORTHEASTERN CMD, EAST OF THE SAIGON RIVER FROM LAI THEU TO THU DUC, ANOTHER RANGER TASK FORCE IS MOVING TODAY TO THE NORTHWESTERN CMD WEST OF THE SAIGON RIVER TO HOC MON, WHEN TODAY'S MOVES ARE COMPLETED SIX RANGER BATTALIONS WILL BE DEPLOYED ALONG THE NORTHERN GIA DINH PROV BOUNDARY, A RANGER BN IS DEPLOYED IN THE SOUTHWESTERN CMD NEAR BINH CHANH AND A REGULAR ARVN BN IS IN THE EASTERN CMD NEAR NHON TRACH, BIEN HOA PROV, SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF TERRITORIAL FORCES ARE OPERATING IN THE CMD, IN ADDITION THERE ARE NINE PROVISIONAL BATTALIONS FROM RVNAF SUPPORT, GARRISON AND TRAINING TROOPS, 28,000 NATIONAL POLICE AND 72,000 ARMED PEOPLE'S SELF DEFENSE FORCE PERSONNEL PREPARED TO DEFEND AND SECURE THE AREA, ARVN AND TERRITORIAL FORCES ARE CAPABLE OF BLOCKING OR DELAYING A MAJOR ENEMY ATTACK ALONG THE MOST LIKELY AVENUES OF APPROACH, WHICH WOULD PERMIT AIR AND OTHER FIRE POWER TO

PAGE 2

TOP SECRET

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TOP SECRET

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BE MASSED ON THE ENEMY BEFORE REACHING THE CITY PROPER, FORCES IN AND NEAR THE CITY CAN PREVENT MASS INFILTRATION AND THE STAGING OF LARGE ENEMY FORCES INSIDE THE CITY AND CONTAIN SMALL ENEMY ACTIONS THAT MAY OCCUR WITHIN THE CITY, THE CMD HAS A VIABLE COMMAND AND CONTROL STRUCTURE THAT PROVIDES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF ALL AVAILABLE FIRE SUPPORT WITH GROUND FORCES, FIXED WINGED GUNSHIPS AND FLARE SHIPS ARE AVAILABLE TO THE CMD 24 HOURS A DAY, THE AC-130 GUNSHIPS PROVIDE CONSTANT COVER DURING THE CRITICAL HOURS OF DARKNESS AND ARE CAPABLE OF ACCURATELY ENGAGING TARGETS THROUGH THE USE OF THE SEVERAL BEACONS DEPLOYED AROUND THE CITY, IN THE ABSENCE OF ON CALL TARGETS THE AC-130 ENGAGES PRE-SELECTED TARGETS, OTHER US AND VNAF AIRCRAFT ARE ALSO EMPLOYED AND TACTICAL AIRCRAFT ARE ON ALERT AT TAN SON NHUT AND BIEN HOA AIR BASES DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS, FACS ARE OVER THE CMD ALL DAY, THE COUNTER-FIRE PLAN IS PARTICULARLY TAILORED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO A ROCKET ATTACK ON SAIGON,

S. COMMANDERS COMMENTS: IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ENEMY CONSIDERS THE PERIOD UNTIL 7 NOV CRITICAL TO THE ATTAINMENT OF HIS POLITICAL OBJECTIVES, HE IS ATTEMPTING TO PUT TOGETHER AN ALL-OUT EFFORT TO MAKE HIS PRESENCE IN NR III FELT WORLD-WIDE, RVNAF HAS THE FORCES AT HAND TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION, HOWEVER, THE CHAIN OF COMMAND IS UNSURE OF ITSELF AND DEFENSIVELY ORIENTED, TO SUCCEED, THEY MUST HAVE ASSURANCE OF CONTINUOUS U.S. AIR SUPPORT DURING WHAT THEY REGARD AS THEIR CRISIS PERIOD, I AM INSURING THAT THAT REQUIREMENT IS MET, AND WE HAVE BEEN MAKING EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS THROUGH OUR COMMAND AND ADVISORY CHAINS TO ASSIST AND BOLSTER THEIR HAND, SINCE THE WORD "SPECTACULAR" WAS COINED IN WASHINGTON AND HAS A VARIETY OF CONNOTATIONS RANGING, I ASSUME, FROM SIGNIFICANT ABF TO A MASSIVE ATTACK ON SAIGON, I WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO ASSESS THE ISSUE OF WHETHER A "SPECTACULAR IS IMMINENT", WE ARE IN A VERY SENSITIVE PERIOD, POLITICALLY SPEAKING, WHEN EVENTS OF RELATIVELY MINOR OR SHORT-TERM MILITARY IMPACT MAY BE INTERPRETED AS DISASTERS, I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE WILL SUFFER SOME SETBACKS AND SURPRISES, BUT WHEN THE DUST SETTLES, SAIGON WILL STILL BE IN GVN HANDS AND THE VERY SUBSTANTIAL STRENGTH OF THE RVNAF RELATIVE TO THE ENEMY WILL BE CLEARLY EVIDENT,

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PAGE 3

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